

7-2013

## Class, Status, Poverty, and Capital: A Guide to Social Stratification in Career Counseling

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### Citation Details

Anctil, Tina M.; Hutchison, Brian; and Smith, Carol Klose, "Class, Status, Poverty, and Capital: A Guide to Social Stratification in Career Counseling" (2013). *Counselor Education Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 16.

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# **Class, Status, Poverty, And Capital: A Guide To Social Stratification In Career Counseling**


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# Social Class Mad Libs



I grew up in a \_\_\_\_\_ class neighborhood. I knew this because the important adults in my life worked such jobs as \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

I knew growing up that there were people from other classes. One time I remember is when \_\_\_\_\_. This made me realize that my class and their class afforded us different outlooks and opportunities.

One important value/ message that I carry with me today based on my early experiences with class is \_\_\_\_\_.

As a counselor who works with career issues, I must be aware how this core value/message might affect my work with \_\_\_\_\_.

# Overview



- Social stratification model for career counseling
- Synthesis & practice implications in career settings
  - ▣ secondary education
  - ▣ higher education
  - ▣ clinical
- Proposals for future scholarship

# Why talk about class?



- Talking about class makes it more visible and assists in the understanding the (often hidden) role of class in our lives.
- Social class is a cultural variable and impacts our world view.
- Social class impacts the values of career counselors in how we work with people.
- Social class impacts the values held by students and clients in how they access education and work opportunities.

# Social class influences such things as:



- Access to educational resources and relational support
- Access to work opportunities
- Occupational attainment
- Level of career adaptability
- Achievement of consistency between work and goals
- The ways that individuals make meaning of work and find motivation for it.
- The value placed upon work
- Individual world views

(Blustein et al, 2002)





# Ladder

## Social Stratification

-able to support themselves financially -ableism -above average salaries -access -affluent -annual salary -assets -below average pay -blue collar/white collar -bourgeois -class (discrimination, status, stratification, classist) -client resources (money) -clients with economic problems -compensation -debt -different occupations (in context) -disadvantaged children -discrimination and economic marginality -earnings -economic -economic background -economic challenges -economic class -economic consequences -economic crises -economic disadvantage -economic disparities -economic downturn -economic exploitation -economic factors -economic hardship -economic indicators -economic inequalities -economic infrastructures -economic minority status -economic mobility -economic oppression -economic power and survival -economic resources -economic station -economic status -economic strain theory -economic structures -economically depressed -economically deprived -economically diverse -economically marginalized -educational attainment -educational levels -english language learners -equal access -equitable -equity -family background -finances -financial -financial challenges -financial earnings -financial issues -financial resources -financial security -financial standing -financial stress -financial struggles -financial worries -financially disadvantaged -first generation college student -food stamps -free and reduced price meal programs -free meals -gap between rich minority and poor majority -high socioeconomic population -high salaried -homeless -household income -income disparities -income equality -inequality -investment assets -issues associated with earning/procuring money -job titles -job type -lack of economic resources -lack of money -lack of opportunity -less work experience -levels of education -limited financial means -little access -little money power -lost income -low education/social class -low income -low skill -low socioeconomic background -low wealth -lower income -lower levels of educational attainment -lower middle class -lower socioeconomic backgrounds -minority students -mommy track jobs -near poverty -needy families -new economic reality -occupational statuses -oppressed -poor -possessing money, power, recognition, social, economic, and ecological forces -power -privilege -range of occupations -resident status -salaries -savings -school level -SES -situational concerns -skilled trade workers -small salary -social advancements -social and economic benefits -social and economic issues -social capital -social change -social inequalities -social marginalization, economic, financial difficulties -social privilege -social standing -social status -social stigma -social structure of poverty -sociocultural systems -socioeconomic -socioeconomic achievement disadvantaged-socioeconomic and environmental factors -socioeconomic background -socioeconomic barriers low socioeconomic -socioeconomic class -socioeconomic context -socioeconomic data -socioeconomic disadvantages -socioeconomic disparities -socioeconomic diversity -socioeconomic factors -socioeconomic group -socioeconomic indicators -socioeconomic level -socioeconomic limitations -socioeconomic lines -socioeconomic means -socioeconomic need -socioeconomic opportunities -socioeconomic perspectives -socioeconomic stress -socioeconomic system -socioeconomic variables -socioeconomically -socioeconomically challenged -socioeconomically privileged -specific occupational titles listed -status -third world -underemployed -underprivileged -underserved populations -unemployed -upper middle class -upward mobility -wages -wealth -welfare to work -white privilege -work status -working class -years of schooling



# Social Stratification



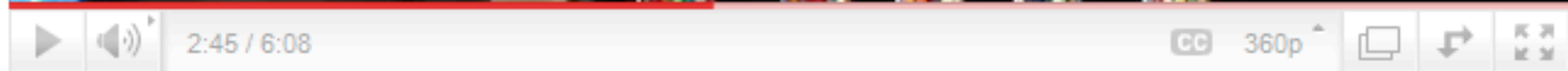
- Social Stratification – the study of hierarchies in society in an attempt to understand unequal distribution of resources (Levine, 2006)

# Immigration, World Poverty and Gumballs - Updated 2010

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# Poverty or the Poor



- Extreme or Absolute Poverty – attempt to create a global designation.
  - ▣ Approximately 1.1 billion people in the developing world are considered to be extremely poor.
  - ▣ Currently \$1.25 per day
- Relative Poverty – attempt to identify a level in relation to the society, a socially constructed poverty level.
  - ▣ Typically considered a better measure for industrialized countries.
  - ▣ In U.S., this is currently \$15.15 per day.

There goes the wine budget!

There's something about "lack" that makes the world seem paler.

Too much  
thinking  
about food.

Day 2 and I NEED COFFEE!!!! (And this makes me realize: I no longer understand the true concept of "need").

It takes more than \$3 a day to feed and maintain my cats!

White  
bread  
is  
boring

It's surprising, really, how little food it takes to quiet a gnawing hunger.

This poverty immersion is a novel exercise, one that, like recycling, will probably make me feel like I've "done my part" for awhile - but is that enough?

Sodium, sugar and  
refined carbs are  
cheap

If I care at all about hormones, antibiotics, pesticides, herbicides and spliced genes being in my food, then on \$3/day, fresh produce and milk are out of the question.

Day 2:  
I've resorted  
to stealing  
already

I'm tired  
of rice.

Culture of poverty = constant hunger for all that dangles clearly within sight but just out of reach?

I will gladly pay you on Tuesday for a hamburger today....

# Comparing Liu et al. (2004) and Hutchison et al. (n.d.) Studies

## Liu et al. (2004)


- 3,915 articles between 1981 and 2000 reviewed in 3 journals
  - Journal of Counseling & Development
  - Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development
  - Journal of Counseling Psychology

## Our Study

- 1,768 articles between 2006 and 2010 reviewed in 15 journals

Code	Title
ADULT	Adultspan
CAV	Counseling and Values
CDQ	Career Development Quarterly
CES	Counselor Education and Supervision
JCC	Journal of College Counseling
JCD	Journal of Counseling and Development
JEC	Journal of Employment Counseling
JHC	Journal of Humanistic Counseling
JMCD	Journal for Multicultural Counseling and Development
JMHC	Journal of Mental Health Counseling
JOA	Journal of Addictions and Offender Counseling
JOC	Journal of Creativity in Mental Health
JSGW	Journal for Specialists in Group Work
MEASURE	Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development
PSC	Professional School Counseling

# Comparing Liu et al. (2004) and Hutchison et al. (n.d.) Studies



## Liu et al. (2004)

- 710 articles included social class--18% of all reviewed articles
- 326 articles including social class were nonempirical
- 384 articles including social class were empirical

## Our Study

- 623 articles included social class--35% of all reviewed articles
- 322 articles including social class were nonempirical
- 301 articles including social class were empirical



# Comparing Liu et al. (2004) and Hutchison et al. (n.d.) Studies (cont.)

## Liu et al. (2004)

Nonempirical articles including social class as a primary aspect of research:

- 3.1% of all nonempirical articles including social class
- 1.4% of all articles including social class
- 0.3% of all articles reviewed

## Our Study

Nonempirical articles including social class as a primary aspect of research:

- 5.0% of all nonempirical articles including social class
- 2.6% of all articles including social class
- 0.9% of all articles reviewed

# Comparing Liu et al. (2004) and Hutchison et al. (n.d.) Studies (cont.)

## Liu et al. (2004)

Empirical articles including social class as data that was gathered, analyzed, and discussed:

- 25.5% of all empirical articles including social class
- 13.8% of all articles including social class
- 2.5% of all articles reviewed

## Our Study

Empirical articles including social class as data that was gathered, analyzed, and discussed:

- 20.6% of all empirical articles including social class
- 10.0% of all articles including social class
- 3.5% of all articles reviewed



# Perspectives: Social Stratification

# Production Model



- ▣ Marx & Engels
- ▣ Owners and workers
- ▣ Tripartite model
  - Low
  - Middle [note stats on those in US who consider selves middle class versus statistical impossibility]
  - High
- ▣ Research implications: income used as measure of class

# Perrucci and Wyson (2008)

- Economists continue to build on the production orientation towards stratification while acknowledging the inadequacy of the tripartite model.
  - ▣ Privileged Class = 1-2%
  - ▣ Credentialed class
    - CEOs and Managers = 13-15%
    - Professionals (includes academics) = 4-5%
  - ▣ Comfort class = 10%
  - ▣ Contingent class = 50%
  - ▣ Self-employed = 3-4%
  - ▣ Excluded class = 10-15%

# Functional Model



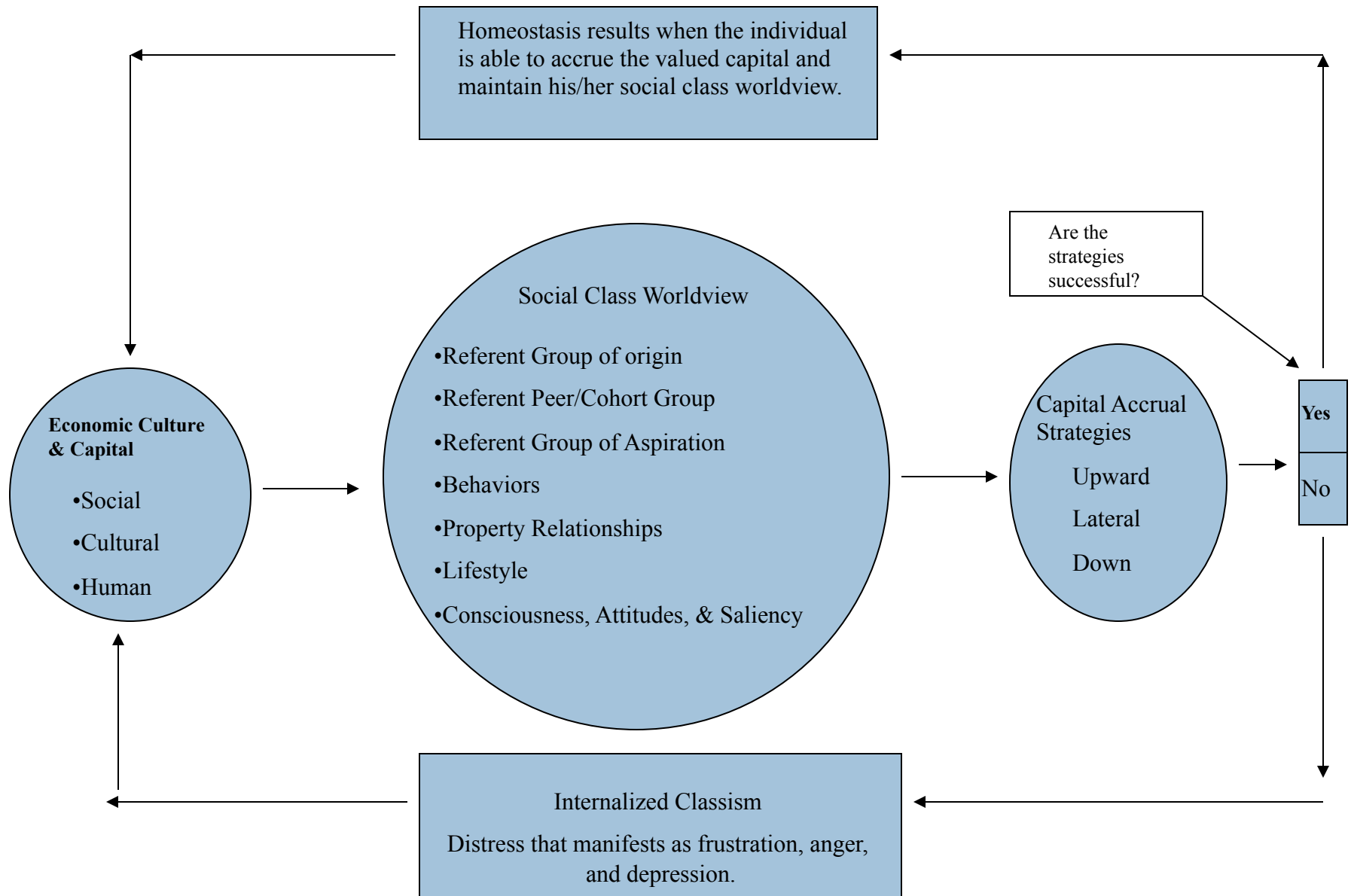
- Max Weber's belief that social class is more complex than production based income.
- Includes prestige that gives access to power.
- In addition to income, social prestige, and connection to social network/ capital also considered important.
- Research implications: Hollingshead and Duncan Indices used to measure socioeconomic status or class



# Phenomenological Modal



- More so than the actual amount of income (production model) or access to power (functional model); it is the individually created worldview generalizations and perception of capital attainment that impacts one's psychological and career development.
- Research Implications: Ten rung ladder technique, self-described attribution of social class or position



Social Class Worldview Model (Liu et al., 2004)

A young man is sitting on a concrete ledge, looking down at his phone. He is wearing a dark jacket with light-colored stripes on the sleeves, a yellow and brown baseball cap, and brown sneakers with yellow laces. In the background, other people are walking, including one person wearing bright red sneakers and blue jeans. The scene is outdoors, possibly near a school entrance.

# Social Stratification: Secondary Schools

# How many children live in poverty?



- Children represent a disproportionate share of the poor in the United States.
  - ▣ 25 percent of the total population, but 35 percent of the poor population.
  - ▣ In 2008, 14.1 million children, or 19.0 percent, were living in poverty.
  - ▣ The poverty rate for children also varies substantially by race and Hispanic origin.

# Developing Awareness of Social Class



- There is a developmental path of perceptions of social class as a child grows.
- From age 9 – 13 children become aware of social valuation.
- Children will begin to learn a valuation process about their perceptions of what is available to them.
- In high school students will balance their preferences for an occupation based upon accessibility and often go for “best bets.”

# Career Development and Economic Disadvantage



- Students who are from economically disadvantaged homes experience career development as different and more difficult than their higher SES peers.
- Peers and siblings have been shown to be more accessible and better sources of career information than their parents.
- The observations that students make about their family members' experiences have an impact upon their own beliefs and attitudes.



# Career perspectives from youth

## Middle Class

- Talk about the value of work being more intrinsic
- More likely to be achievement motivated
- Families support career exploration
- Role models in a variety of occupations
- Have resources to explore career options
- Value autonomy, self-direction, and independence

## Working class/working poor

- Talk about the value of work as being more extrinsic
- Work is necessary to live.
- Career exploration is not encouraged nor practical
- Role models are often limited to who the parents know.
- More likely to find fulfillment in activities outside of work
- May value community and working together

# Implications: Career Aspirations



- Economically disadvantaged students often have the same type of career aspirations of other students in middle school.
- However,
  - ▣ Not aligned to educational class performance
  - ▣ Not aligned to high school course selection
  - ▣ Lack knowledge of the educational requirements
  - ▣ Other contextual factors may create barriers to achievement (economic resources, family beliefs, etc.)

# Implications: School Counselors as Advocates



- School counselors as leaders in high poverty schools  
(Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007)
  - ▣ Become the culture broker among students, families, & school staff.
  - ▣ Design culturally responsive curriculum (with teachers)
  - ▣ Make the school environment family centric
- Promote alignment between the school counseling program & the academic achievement missions
- Help teachers understand the impact of classism and poverty on academic achievement

# Implications: School Counseling Practice



- ❑ 1. Evaluate your personal attitudes and beliefs around economically disadvantaged students
- ❑ 2. Provide greater opportunities for the school-to-work transition.
- ❑ 3. Provide access to role models who are like themselves.
- ❑ 4. Take on a leadership role in working within your school to increase the sensitivity in working with low income students and their families.

# Implications: School Counseling Practice



- 5. Most vocational theories have been modeled and developed from the middle-class perspective, therefore you may have to develop differentiated approaches to work with this group of students.
- 6. Build and access social support through siblings and peers.
- 7. Focus on self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and building support systems



## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION SETTINGS



# First Generation-College Students Characteristics



- First-generation students represented approximately 22% of students who entered postsecondary education
- Only 24% of these first-generation students completed a bachelor's degree, compared with 68% of students whose parents were college graduates.

(Chen, 2005)

# First Generation-College Students

## Characteristics



- First Generation students are more likely to exhibit the following characteristics:
  - ▣ come from low-income families
  - ▣ be Black or Hispanic
  - ▣ be less prepared academically for college
    - Lower ACT/SAT scores
    - Lower high school GPA's
  - ▣ delay entry into college
  - ▣ begin college at a 2-year institution
  - ▣ attend college part-time and discontinuously.

(Chen, 2005)

# First-Generation Student' s Struggles



- Lack of preparation
- Middle- and upper-class value systems
  - ▣ issues of identity
  - ▣ social acceptance
  - ▣ self-esteem
- Carry their own and their families expectations.
- Lack of social and cultural capital
  - ▣ Knowledge of campus environment
  - ▣ Access to human and financial resources
  - ▣ Knowledge of terminology and general functioning

# First-Generation Student's Struggles

- Lack financial resources. On average most first generation students need at least \$6,000 dollars to make up the difference between financial aid and financial need.
  - ▣ More likely to work part-time which impacts the students ability to engage in academic and social integration.
- Limited time to devote to academics and campus activities
  - ▣ More likely to only attend class
  - ▣ Lower involvement with faculty
  - ▣ Know only a small portion of campus

# First-Generation Student' s Struggles



- Lower self-efficacy beliefs
- Lower outcome beliefs.
- Are more likely to feel less connected to campus and faculty.
  - ▣ “The only thing that interfered with my learning is that I felt left out from the groups and everyone else. I don’ t feel like I belong here or there. I guess I do not fit in with them.”

Jehangir (2010)

# Characteristics of Success for First-Generation College Students

- Age (non-traditional students over 30 tend to do better than younger students)
- Access to financial assistance
- Seeking TRIO services early in college career
- Class sensitive counseling
- Higher self-efficacy
- On-campus support
- Strong work ethic
- Sense of independence
- Intellectualism

(Hertel, J. 2002; Yousif, 2009; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007)



# Identity development

- “Leaving off” and “Taking on”
- Defined by the dissonance created between living between the world of their childhood and the academic world.
  - ▣ Those who attend college are breaking not continuing family traditions.
  - ▣ The parents and community may be threatened by new intellectualism even if they want to be supportive.
    - College and graduate school may be seen as a corrupting influence.
  - ▣ And students may be struggling to fit in their new academic world.

# Implications: Potential Presenting Problems



- Depression
- Relationship Stress
- Family of Origin Issues
- Academic Concerns
- Vocational Decision Difficulties
- Stress Management

(Lucas & Berkel, 2005)

# Implications: Student Outreach



- Accessibility
- Meeting Students where they are
- Partnering with Student Affairs Professionals
  - ▣ Academic Advisors
  - ▣ Resident Advisors
  - ▣ Trio and Upward Bound Program Directors
- Student Government and Student Groups

# Implications: Student Outreach



- Outreach to first generation students should be accessible in a variety of mediums.
  - ▣ The goal is to inform all students about the services offered.
- Access to services by first generation students needs careful consideration.
  - ▣ Broad appointment times for students who are working
  - ▣ Invited guest lectures in freshman seminars and other appropriate courses.
  - ▣ Being approachable.

# Implications: Faculty and Staff Education



- Involvement with faculty can make a huge difference. It is important to discuss students perceptions of faculty.
- Be aware of programs that provide ways to engage and develop mentoring relationships.
- Help students to become connected.
- Provide information to faculty
  - ▣ On how they may be perceived by first generation students
  - ▣ Availability to students



## Social Stratification in Clinical Settings



# Social class and psychological structure



- Locus of control is generally more external for lower classes than upper classes.
- Also, high SES was related to more liberal views of women's roles in the workplace.
- Being without (social class related) resources multiplies misfortune's impact, as does discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or health.
- Persons from lower social classes are viewed as more psychologically disturbed by psychiatrists than persons from middle/upper class.

# Implications: Lower Socioeconomic Job Values



- Jobs are sought for a feeling of productivity, giving to the community
- View work as a way to meet external demands: Economic survival
- More likely to take jobs that are available rather than “finding a good fit”
- May see manual labor as honorable and honest work

# Counselor Bias



- “The unspoken assumption that a working-class identity is something from which none should attempt to escape and that people living in poverty are there because they have not pulled sufficiently hard on their own bootstraps” (p. 282)

# Family Systems Perspective: SES and career development



- Family SES has been shown to exert a powerful influence on:
  - Occupational aspirations
  - Occupational expectations
  - Individual occupational choice
  - Occupational status
  - Career self-efficacy
  - The values toward the world of work.

# Implications: Classism & Microaggressions (Smith & Redington, 2010)

- Classist microassaults
  - ▣ Classy, high class, class act, low rent, White trash, trailer trash, red necks, hillbillies, welfare queen
- Classist microinsults: more subtle than name calling, impact may be outside of the awareness of the perpetrators. Confusing emotionally.
  - ▣ Counselors are not immune (Chalifoux, 1996)
    - Middle class therapist tend to offer unrealistic guidance to lower class clients. “Freedom of choice takes money”.

## Implications: Class & Microaggressions (Smith & Redington, 2010)



- Classist microinvalidations: communications that demean the lived experiences of poor and working class people.
  - ▣ Cultural portrayals of working-class people
  - ▣ Reduction of labor unions today and lack of concern by the majority



## Implications for low income clients: The 50 minute counseling session (Thompson, Cole, & Nitzarim, 2012)

- Consider extending your “traditional” role by extending the 50-min hour
- Recognize the need for flexibility, support, and advocacy
- Seek out acts of alliance or relationship building, including connecting the client to important life essentials (housing, SSDI, unemployment benefits, etc.)
- Make any social class differences between you and your client explicit in the counseling relationship.
- Avoid overt displays of social class (e.g., tropical vacations, golfing, etc.)

# Implications: Clinical Contexts

## (Dollarhide, 2012)



- Be aware of socio-political messages that shape worldviews of yourself and your clients
- Practice multicultural competence, including an awareness of bias and discrimination
- Recognize the economic realities and opportunity structures in your client's life
  - ▣ Access to stable jobs
  - ▣ Safe housing
  - ▣ High-performing schools
  - ▣ Health & social services

# Future Directions



# Classism Perceptual Bias



- Investigate how classist microaggressions operate in society and their impact on career aspirations.
- Further investigation of counselor perception of class and counselor behaviors (e.g., attraction, diagnosis)
- Implicit Association Test protocol development and use in research

# Social Class Dissonance



- SCD Measure Study
  - ▣ Validating a \_\_\_ item instrument to measure SCD
  - ▣ Data analysis stage
  
- SCD and Career Maturity Study
  - ▣ Examining correlation between SCD and Career Maturity in low-income going, diverse student college student population
  - ▣ Data analysis stage

# Phenomenological understanding of class and work

- Research with subjects across the lifespan to explore the intersection between class and work
  - ▣ Qualitative methods
  - ▣ Meaning-making
  - ▣ Values orientation
  - ▣ Dignity and work
- Coordination with community-based organizations
  - ▣ Job Corps
  - ▣ College Bound
  - ▣ Every Child's Hope



# Contact Us



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